

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn

(The Believers)

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn was revealed in Makkah and it has 118 Verses and 6 sections

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

With the name of Allah, the All-Merciful, the Very-Merciful

Verses 1 - 11

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ فِي صَلَاتِهِمْ خَاشِعُونَ ﴿٢﴾
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنِ اللَّغْوِ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٣﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ ﴿٤﴾
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿٥﴾ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا
مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ﴿٦﴾ فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ
فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴿٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٨﴾
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ ﴿١٠﴾
الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ ۖ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Success is really attained by the believers [1] who are concentrative in their Ṣalāh (prayers) [2] and who keep themselves away from vain things [3], and who are performers of Zakāh,* [4] and who guard their private parts [5] except from their wives or from those (slave-girls) owned by their right hands, because they

*. Although Zakāh is normally known as the obligatory alms prescribed as a second pillar of Islam, but the literal meaning of the word is 'purification'. Both the meanings are possible here. According to the second meaning the reference would be to the purification of inward qualities i.e. morals. Some commentators have construed this verse in this sense. That is why we have used the word 'performers' as a literal translation of "فاعِلون" (Fa'ilun) instead of 'payers' which admits the first meaning only.

are not liable to blame. [6] However, those who seek (sexual pleasure) beyond that are the transgressors [7] – and (success is attained) by those who honestly look after their trusts and covenant, [8] and who consistently observe their prayers. [9] Those are the inheritors [10] who will inherit Firdaus (the Paradise). They will be there forever. [11]

Commentary

Merits and special features of Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn

Musnād of Aḥmad quotes Sayyidnā 'Umar al-Fārūq ؓ that whenever a *wahy* was being revealed to the Holy Prophet ﷺ those near him used to hear a sound like the buzz of the bees. One day when they heard such a sound, they all waited hoping to learn about the revelation. When the Holy Prophet ﷺ returned to his normal state after receiving the *wahy*, he sat down facing the Ka'bah and prayed to Allah in the following words:

اَللّٰهُمَّ زِدْنَا وَلَا تَقْصُصْنَا وَآكِرْمَنَا وَلَا تُهِنَّا وَاعْظِنَا وَلَا تَحْرِمْنَا وَآثِرْنَا وَلَا تُؤْتِرْ عَلَيْنَا
وَارْضَ عَنَّا وَارْضِنَا

"O Allah, give us more (bounties) and do not decrease (them for us) and grant us respect and do not put us to humiliation, and give us and do not deprive us and give us preference (on our enemies) and do not give preference (to our enemies) against us and be pleased with us and make us pleased."

Then the Holy Prophet ﷺ said to his companions, "Just now ten verses have been revealed to me and anyone who follows them in letter and spirit will go to heaven." He then recited the first ten verses of Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn. (Ibn Kathīr)

Nasa'ī in his كتاب التفسير has quoted Yazīd Ibn Babnūs that he once questioned Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها about the habits and the behavior of the Holy Prophet ﷺ to which she replied that it was according to what has been revealed in the Qur'ān. Then she recited these ten verses of the Qur'ān and said, "these verses describe his behavior".

What is *Falāḥ*? How and from where can it be obtained?

فَدَأْفَلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ

Success is really attained by the believers - 23:1.

The word *falāḥ* (translated above as 'success') has been used in the Qur'ān and Sunnah on numerous occasions. The call to prayers invites every Muslim towards *falāḥ* five times a day. The word signifies the attainment of all desires as well as protection from all misfortunes. (Qāmūs). It is so comprehensive in its connotation that it may be regarded as the acme of one's desire - but the total *falāḥ*, where no desire remains unfulfilled or complete immunity from the vicissitudes of fate exists, is not granted even to great kings or to the most revered prophets of Allah. In any case there is an ever-present fear of a decline in or loss of good fortune, or the apprehension of an impending disaster, and no living person can claim to be free from it.

Thus it is evident that total *falāḥ* cannot be achieved in this world which is a place of pain and suffering, where nothing is everlasting and everything must ultimately perish. However this priceless commodity will be available in another world, namely the Paradise and it is there that people will achieve all their wishes very promptly وَلَهُمْ مَا يَدْعُونَ (They have all that they call for - 36:57). In that world there will be no sorrow, no distress, and everyone will enter there with the following words on his lips:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَذْهَبَ عَنَّا الْحَزْنَ إِنَّ رَبَّنَا لَغَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ الَّذِي أَحَلَّنَا دَارَ الْمُقَامَةِ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ

Praise belongs to Allah who has put away all sorrow from us. Surely our Lord is All-Forgiving, All-Thankful, who of His bounty has made us to dwell in the abode of everlasting life - 35:34, 35.

This verse also suggest that in this world there is nobody who at some time or the other has not been afflicted by pain and anguish. Therefore, on entering the Paradise people will say that they have been delivered from all sufferings. In Sūrah al-A'lā while the Qur'ān says that *falāḥ* may be obtained by purifying oneself against sins (فَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى), it also says that total *falāḥ* may be achieved in the Hereafter only. A Person who aims at *falāḥ* must not succumb to the temptations of this world:

بَلْ تُؤْثِرُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى

Nay, but you prefer the present life; and the world to come is better, and more lasting. - 87: 16, 17

In brief, while total *falāḥ* may be obtained in the Paradise only, Allah grants *falāḥ* to his servants in this world also in the narrow sense of the word i.e. he grants them prosperity and relief from pain. In the present verse Allah has promised *falāḥ* to those believers who possess the seven attributes mentioned therein, and it includes the total *falāḥ* which can be achieved in the Hereafter only in addition to whatever *falāḥ* may be obtained in this world.

Here one may ask that while the promise of total *falāḥ* in the Hereafter to the believers who possess the seven attributes mentioned in this verse is understandable, the common experience is that in this world the recipients of *falāḥ* (prosperity and success) are generally the infidels and the impious persons. On the other hand the prophets and other reformers have, in all ages, suffered privations of life. The answer to this is that since total *falāḥ* is to be achieved in the Hereafter only, it is inevitable that every body in this world, whether he is a good and a pious man or whether he is a wicked person and an unbeliever, must face a certain measure of pain and hardship. Similarly every person, good or bad, has some of his wishes granted in this world. In these circumstances how is one to decide as to which of these two categories is the recipient of *falāḥ*. The answer to this question can only be provided by the fate which awaits them.

Human experience and observations provide sufficient evidence that although the pious people who possess the seven attributes mentioned above may at times face hardships and tribulations in this world, yet very soon they are released from all distress and they achieve their wishes. They command the respect of the whole world as long as they live and then after their death their memory is cherished and revered by all.

The seven attributes of a perfect Believer on the basis of which he has been promised *falāḥ* in this verse both in this world and in the Hereafter

The first and most important attribute which is fundamental and basic to everything else is that a person should be a true believer. The other seven attributes mentioned in the verse are discussed below.

The first attribute is خُشُوعُ *Khushū'* (translated in the text as being concentrative) during prayers. The literal meaning of this word is

"calmness", but in religious terminology it means "to bring about a state of perfect concentration in the heart" so that he does not knowingly allow any thoughts to enter his heart other than the remembrance of Allah. It also means that during prayers a person must abstain from moving his body and limbs unnecessarily (Bayān ul-Qur'ān). He must, in particular, avoid those movements of the body which have been forbidden by the Holy Prophet ﷺ and which the jurists have compiled under the general heading مَكْرُوهَات (things which are disliked during prayers). Tafsīr Maḥzarī quotes the above definition of خُشُوع (Khushū') from Sayyidnā 'Amr Ibn Dīnār ؓ. Other scholars have given different definitions of this word, but they are in fact further details of what the serenity of the heart and the body means. For instance, according to Sayyidnā Mujāhid, casting down one's eyes and keeping the voice low is خُشُوع whereas Sayyidnā 'Alī ؓ said that خُشُوع is to refrain from casting sideways glances obliquely. Sayyidnā 'Aṭā' says that the word means "not toying with any part of the body". There is a ḥadīth from Sayyidnā Abū Dharr ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said, "Allah keeps an eye over His servant during prayers so long as he concentrates his attention on Allah, but when he turns his attention elsewhere and glances obliquely sideways, Allah also turns away from him." (Maḥzarī) The Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have directed Sayyidnā 'Anas ؓ to keep his eyes fixed at the spot which he touched with his forehead when performing *sajdah* (prostration) and not to look right and left during prayers.

Sayyidnā Abū Hurairah ؓ says that the Holy Prophet ﷺ saw a man praying who was toying with his beard and remarked لَوْ خَشَعَ قَلْبُ هَذَا لَخَشَعَتْ جَوَارِحُهُ (If this man had Khushū' in his heart, his body and limbs would have remained calm).

How important is Khushū' during prayers?

Imām Ghazzali, Qurtubī and some other scholars are of the view that Khushū' during prayers is obligatory and a prayer offered without total Khushū' will be deemed not to have been performed. However there are others who believe that while Khushū' is the essence of prayers and its absence deprives the prayers of their true purpose, yet it cannot be regarded as an indispensable condition for the prayers to be valid and its absence will not render it necessary to repeat performance of the prayers.

Hakim ul-Ummah has written in Bayān ul-Qur'ān that while

Khushū' is not a necessary condition for the validity of the prayers, yet it is an essential element for the acceptance of the prayers by Allah and from this point of view it is obligatory. Ṭabarānī in his book al-Mu'jam al-Kabīr has related a *ḥadīth* on the authority of Sayyidnā Abū Dardā' ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "The first thing that will be taken away from this Ummah is Khushū' so much so that a time will come when no one will be left to practice Khushū'".

The second attribute of a good Muslim is that he abstains from frivolous and vain things. لَغْوٌ (Laghw, translated in the text as 'vain things') means useless talk and action which do not bring any religious reward and in its extreme form it may include sinful acts that are positively harmful and must, therefore, be avoided. And in its mild form *laghw* is neither useful nor harmful but it is very desirable to give up this habit. There is a *ḥadīth* in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said من حسن إسلام المرأ تركه ما لا يعنيه (It is a part of one's being a fair Muslim that he gives up all that is useless for him). For these reasons guarding oneself against useless acts has been described as an attribute of a good Muslim in this verse.

The third attribute is Zakāh which, literally means "to purify" but in religious terminology it means giving in charity a portion of one's wealth subject to certain prescribed conditions and the word has been generally used in the Qur'ān in this sense. This meaning of the word can be applied in this verse also. However this meaning of the word in the present context has been questioned by some scholars on the ground that this verse was revealed in Makkah when Zakāh was not made obligatory. (Zakāh was made obligatory after Hijrah to Madīnah). Ibn Kathīr and other commentators have answered this objection by claiming that Zakāh was in actual fact made obligatory in Makkah as will be evident from Sūrah Al-Muzzammil, which is by consensus a Makkan Sūrah, in which the words وَأَتُوا الزَّكَاةَ (and pay *zakāh*) occur alongside of the words أَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ

However arrangements for its collection and details regarding the determination of wealth liable to Zakāh (*niṣāb*) were settled after Hijrah to Madīnah. According to this interpretation of the verse Zakāh was made obligatory in Makkah but rules prescribing its various details were formulated in Madīnah. As regards those scholars who hold the view that Zakāh was made obligatory after Hijrah to Madīnah, they believe that

the word must be interpreted here in its common literal sense i.e. to purify one's own self. There is an indication in the verse itself which supports this meaning of the word. It will be observed that wherever obligatory Zakāh has been mentioned in the Qur'ān the words used are إِيْتَاءُ الزَّكَاةِ (which refer to the 'payment' of *zakāh*) whereas here the words used are لِلزَّكَاةِ فَاعِلُونَ (who are performers of *zakāh*) which clearly indicates that in this verse the word has not been used in its technical meaning. Besides, the word فَاعِلُونَ (performers) is related to فَعَلَ (performance) and technically Zakah is not an act but a portion of wealth and the use of the word فَاعِلُونَ for this portion of wealth needs suitable explanation. If the technical meaning of the word Zakāh is adopted, then its being obligatory and binding on all Muslims is undisputed and if the word means purification of soul then that too is obligatory and to cleanse one's soul of impurities and sins such as polytheism, hypocrisy, vanity, jealousy, hatred, greed, miserliness is called تَزْكِيَّة (tazkiyah). All these things are forbidden and are major sins and it is obligatory to purify one's soul from them.

Forth Attribute is guarding ones private parts against unlawful liaison. وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَفْوَاجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ إِلَّا عَلَى أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ (And who guard their private parts except from their wives or from those (slave-girls) owned by their right hands - 23:5,6). They satisfy their needs with their wives and their legal bondmaids according to the prescribed laws and avoid unlawful liaison. About these people the Qur'ān says فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ (Because they are not liable to blame - 23:6), which also means that the sexual desire must be kept under strict control and must not be allowed to become a means of gratification of one's passions.

فَمَنْ ابْتَغَى وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَادُونَ (However, those who seek (sexual pleasure) beyond that are the transgressors - 7). Satisfying one's desire with someone other than one's own wife or a lawfully acquired slave-girl is strictly forbidden and the ban includes adultery (marrying a woman whom one is not allowed to marry under the religious code is also adultery), having sex with one's wife or slave-girl when she is menstruating or is confined, or having unnatural sex with them, homosexuality and bestiality, while most jurists include masturbation also in the ban. (Tafsīr Bayān ul-Qur'ān, Qurṭubī, al-Baḥr ul-Muḥīṭ, etc.)

Fifth Attribute of a good Muslim is that he should discharge his

trust truly and faithfully. وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لَا يُخَالِفُونَ عَهْدَهُمْ (And [success is attained] by those who honestly look after their trusts and covenant, - 23:8). The word أَمَانَات (trusts) covers everything which a person has undertaken to perform or which have been placed under his care as trust. Since it may be of many kinds, the word is used in plural, so that it may include all sorts of trusts whether they may relate to the rights of Allah or to the rights of human beings. To perform scrupulously all the injunctions and duties made obligatory by religious laws and to abstain from things which have been forbidden or declared undesirable is to look after the trust that relates to the rights of Allah. As regards the discharge of trusts relating to the rights of human beings, these take numerous forms, and the most well-known is that a person must promptly return to the owner on demand any goods which have been in his custody as trust. Any information received in confidence is a trust and to reveal it to anybody else without the permission of the person who gave it is a breach of trust. Mutual settlement between an employer and an employee of the terms of employment, i.e. the work to be done and time to be spent in the performance of work, and the wages to be paid is a trust and binding on both the parties and a violation of this agreement by either party would constitute a breach of trust. Hence discharge of trust is an all-encompassing word.

Sixth Attribute of a perfect Muslim is to fulfill his covenant. The word عَهْد (covenant) has two connotations. One is a covenant between two parties specifying the duties and obligations of either party and is binding on both and a breach of this covenant by either party is a fraud and deceit and therefore forbidden in Islam. The other is where a person voluntarily promises to give something to someone or undertakes to do some job. This is known as وَعْد (promise) and its fulfillment is also obligatory under the dictates of Sharī'ah. There is a Ḥadīth which says العدة دين (a promise is like a debt). It means that a promise is like a debt and must be fulfilled in the same manner as a debt must be discharged, the difference being that whereas the repayment of a debt can be enforced through a court of law, a voluntary promise is not enforceable likewise. Nevertheless the person making the promise is morally bound to abide by it and failure to do so would be a sin unless there is a religious ground for his inability to fulfill his promise.

Seventh attribute

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ (And who consistently observe their prayers - 23:9). To observe one's prayers here means to offer them regularly at the appointed time, and the word صَلَوَات (Prayers) has been used in the plural form to include all the five prayers. In an earlier verses the word صَلَوة (Ṣalāh: prayer) was used in the singular because the emphasis was on Khushū' which is the essence of all prayers whether they are *farḍ*, *wājib*, *sunnah* or *nafl*.

A careful study of the above seven attributes would show that they encompass all the duties which man owes to Allah and to fellow men, and all the laws governing those duties. A person who possesses these attributes and adheres to them is a complete *mu'min* (believer) and deserving of *falāḥ* in this world and in the Hereafter. It will also be noted that these seven attributes begin and also end with a reference to prayers which suggests that if prayers are offered in the prescribed manner with all their requirements, the other attributes will appear automatically.

أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْوَارِثُونَ الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ

Those are the inheritors who will inherit Firdaus (Paradise) - 23:10,11.

The good Muslims who possess the attributes described above have been declared in this verse to be the heirs to the garden of Paradise. There is a suggestion here that just as the assets of a deceased person must devolve on his heirs, similarly the possessors of these attributes will, without doubt, enter Paradise. It should be noted that the possessors of these seven qualities have been mentioned in the beginning as those who attain *falāḥ* or success, then after describing these qualities it is mentioned in this last sentence that possessors of these qualities will inherit Paradise. This indicates that the total *falāḥ* (success) may be achieved in Paradise only.

Verses 12 - 22

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظْمًا فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظْمَ لَحْمًا ۖ ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا

اٰخَرُ فَفَبَرَكْنَا اللّٰهَ اَحْسَنُ الْخٰلِقِيْنَ ﴿١٢﴾ ثُمَّ اَنۡكُمۡ بَعۡدَ ذٰلِكَ لَمَيۡتُوۡنَ
 ﴿١٣﴾ ثُمَّ اَنۡكُمۡ يَوۡمَ الْبَیۡمَةِ تُبۡعَثُوۡنَ ﴿١٤﴾ وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوۡقَکُمۡ سَبۡعَ
 طَرَاقٍ ۚ وَمَا کُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلۡقِ غٰفِلِيۡنَ ﴿١٥﴾ وَاَنۡزَلۡنَا مِنَ السَّمَآءِ مَآءً
 بِقَدَرٍ فَاَسۡکَنۡنٰهُ فِی الْاَرۡضِ ۚ وَاِنَّا عَلٰی ذَهَابٍ بِهٖ لَقٰدِرُوۡنَ ﴿١٦﴾
 فَاَنۡشَاۡنَا لَکُمۡ بِهٖ جَنَّتٍ مِّنۡ نَّخِیۡلٍ وَّاَعۡنَابٍ لَّکُمۡ فِیۡهَا فَوَاکِهُ کَثِیۡرَةٌ
 وَمِنْهَا تَاۡکُلُوۡنَ ﴿١٧﴾ وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِنْ طُوۡرٍ سَیۡۡۡءَآءُ تَنۡبُتُ بِالذَّهۡنِ
 وَصَبۡغٍ لِّلۡاَکِلِیۡنَ ﴿١٨﴾ وَاِنَّ لَکُمۡ فِی الْاَنۡعَامِ لَعِبَرَةً ۚ نُّسۡقِیۡکُمۡ مِّمَّا
 فِیۡ بُطُوۡنِهَا وَلَکُمۡ فِیۡهَا مَنَافِعُ کَثِیۡرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَاۡکُلُوۡنَ ﴿١٩﴾ وَعَلِیَّهَا
 وَعَلٰی الْفُلۡکِ تُحۡمَلُوۡنَ ﴿٢٠﴾

And We have created man from an extract of clay. [12]
 Then We made him a sperm-drop in a firm resting place.
 [13] Then We made the sperm-drop into a clot, then We
 turned the clot into a foetus-lump, then We made the
 foetus-lump into bones, then We clothed the bones with
 flesh; thereafter We developed it into another creature.
 So, glorious is Allah, the Best of the creators. [14] Then,
 after all this, you are to die. [15] Then you are to be
 raised again on the Day of Judgment. [16]

And We created upon you seven paths (heavens) and We
 were never neglectful of the creation. [17]

And We sent down water from the sky in due measure,
 then We lodged it in the earth, and of course, We are
 able to take it away. [18] Then We produced with it
 gardens of date-palms and vines for your benefit. For
 you there are many fruits in them, and of them you eat
 [19] – and (We produced) a tree (of olive) that comes out
 from the (mount) Ṭūr of Sinai, which grows having oil
 and a dressing for those who eat. [20]

And indeed there is a sure lesson in the cattle for you.
 We give you a drink from that which lies in their
 bellies, and for you there are many benefits in them,

and of them you eat, [21] and on them and on the boats
you are transported. [22]

Commentary

In the earlier verses it was explained that man can achieve *falāḥ* (success) in this world and in the Hereafter by spending his time in assiduously worshipping Allah and, in compliance with His commands, by keeping his body and soul pure at all times and by discharging the claims and duties which he owes to fellow human beings. The present verse gives an account of the universal and supreme power of Allah the Almighty and a manifestation of His power in the process leading to the creation of the human race. If a person whom Allah has given wisdom and intelligence ponders seriously the meanings of these verses, he must necessarily choose the path which would lead him to *falāḥ* in this world and in the Hereafter.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِنْ طِينٍ

And We have created man from an extract of clay. - 23:12

The word سُلَالَة *sulālah* means "extract" and طِين *ṭīn* means "wet earth" or clay and the verse means that man was created from some special elements extracted from earth. Creation of mankind began with Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام who was himself created from this essence of earth. Therefore the first creation has been related to earth after which the seed of one man becomes the means of another man's creation. In the next verse ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً (then We made him a sperm-drop) this same point has been mentioned differently. The meaning of all this is that the first life i.e. Sayyidnā 'Ādam عليه السلام was created from earth and continued further with the sperm which is a refined element of the same earth. This is how a majority of commentators have explained this verse. Another view is that سُلَالَة مِنْ طِين (extract of clay) may also mean human seed because it is produced from the food which a man takes and the food grows out of the earth.

Seven stages of the creation of man

In the above verse seven stages in the creation of man have been described. These are:

(1) سُلَالَة مِنْ طِين (an extract of clay).

(2) نُطْفَة (sperm-drop),

(3) عَلَقَهُ (clot),

(4) مُضْغَةً (foetus-lump),

(5) عِظَام (bones),

(6) clothing bones with flesh, and

(7) completion of the process of creation by blowing the spirit into the child.

A very interesting story about Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؑ

Qurtubī in his commentary has related a very interesting story in which Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؑ is said to have determined the exact date of the Night of Majesty (لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ) and based his reasoning on this verse: The story goes like this. One day Sayyidnā 'Umar ؑ while sitting in the company of some eminent companions of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, asked them on what date of the month of Ramaḍān the Night of Majesty (Lailatulqadr) would fall. None of them was able to mention a specific date so they all said that only Allah knew the answer. Sayyidnā Umar ؑ then turned to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؑ who was the youngest among them and asked him if he had an answer to the question. Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؑ then said, "O Amir ul-Mominin! Allah created seven skies and seven earths. He created man in seven stages and provided him sustenance from seven sources. Therefore in my opinion the Night of Majesty (لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ) will surely fall on the twenty-seventh night of the month of Ramaḍān." When Sayyidnā Umar ؑ heard this reasoning, he said to the companions, "See, this lad has given an answer which none of you could give". This story is reproduced at length in the Musnād of Ibn Abi Shaibah. When Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؑ mentioned the seven stages of man's creation, he was obviously alluding to this verse. As for the seven sources of human sustenance, the reference is to the verse in Sūrah 'Abas:

فَالْبَتِّتْنَا فِيهَا حَبًّا وَعِنَبًا وَقَضْبًا وَرَيْتُونًا وَنَخْلًا وَحَدَائِقَ غُلْبًا وَفَاكِهَةً وَأَبًّا

And therein made the grains to grow and vines, and reeds, and olives, and palms, and clense-tree gardens, and fruits, and pastures. 90:27 - 31

This verse mentions eight items of which the first seven are food for human beings and the eighth provides fodder for animals.

The supreme beauty and eloquence of the Qur'ānic language is evident from the fact that the seven stages of the creation of man have not all been described in the same manner. In describing the metamorphosis of the human foetus from one stage to the next, the word **ثُمَّ** (afterwards) has been used at some place which is a suggestion of some delay in the process, while at other places the particle **فَ** has been used as a prefix indicating uninterrupted succession in the process of change. Some of the changes in the human foetus in mother's womb take a long time to take place whereas other changes occur in relatively shorter periods. Thus the word **ثُمَّ** has been used in the context of the first two changes. First there is **سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ** (an extract of clay) which changes into the seed **ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً** (then We made him a sperm-drop). Now it is well known that the production of food from the earth, its absorption in the human body of that special element which changes into the seed is a long drawn out process. Similarly the third stage of the transformation from the sperm-drop **نُطْفَةٍ** to clot **مُضْغَةٍ** takes a long time to materialize and has been described by the Qur'an in the words **ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً** (then We made the sperm-drop into a clot - 23:14). The next three stages, i.e. from **عَلَقَةٍ** (clot) to **مُضْغَةٍ** (foetus-lump), from **مُضْغَةٍ** to bones, and thirdly clothing flesh on bones occurring in short periods is not too remote a possibility, and in describing these three changes the particle **فَ** has been used which, as has been explained earlier, is indicative of uninterrupted succession. The final change in the condition of the unborn child comes when life and soul are breathed into it. And since, according to human reckoning, putting life and soul into a lifeless mass must necessarily take a long time, therefore, here again the word **ثُمَّ** has been used to describe this final stage of transformation.

The final stage in human creation, i.e. putting life and soul into it

The Qur'an describes this change with the words **ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ** (We developed it into another creature - 23:14). This distinction is due to the fact that whereas the first six stages in the creation of man are related to the world of elements and substances, the final stage relates to the transfer of soul from the world of spirits into his body and is, therefore, described as **خَلْقًا آخَرَ**, i.e. a special or distinct creation.

Biological spirit and Real Spirit

"We developed it into another creature" in this verse is interpreted by Ibn 'Abbās, Mujāhid, Sha'bi, 'Ikrimah, Ḍaḥḥāk and Abul-'Aliyah to mean

blowing spirit into the body. Tafsīr Mazharī mentions that most probably it refers to the biological spirit. According to its explanation spirits are of two kinds. Biological spirit is a subtle substance embedded in every part of the body of a human being or an animal. This is the spirit recognized by medical scientists and the philosophers. This biological spirit is created after the organs are created. That is why its creation is mentioned in this verse with the word ثُمَّ (thereafter). The other kind of spirit is the 'Real spirit'. It belongs to the spiritual universe. This real spirit was created long before the creation of human beings, and it is these spirits which were assembled by Allah when He asked them, "Am I not your Lord?" and they answered, "Why not?" This Real Spirit having been created long before, is connected by Allah Ta'ālā with biological spirit in a manner not known to anyone. Life of man depends on this connection and when biological spirit of a person is disconnected from Real Spirit, he dies. Therefore, it is also possible that it is this connection which is referred to in this verse by the words another creation.

فَتَبَرَّكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ (So, glorious is Allah, the best of the creators-23:14). The word خَلَقَ and تَخْلُقُ mean "to create something from nothing", which is a very special and exclusive attribute of Allah. Thus, Allah alone is the creator and none else. Neither an angel nor man can create anything. However sometime these two words are used in the sense of manufacturing which is no more than the reshaping and assembly by man of substances created by Allah. The man who does this is also called the creator of an article. The Qur'ān says تَخْلُقُونَ إِنْكَأ (you invent a lie-29:17), and again it says about Sayyidnā 'Īsā عَلَيْهِ السَّلَامُ أَنِّي أَخْلُقُ لَكُمْ مِنَ الطِّينِ كَهَيْئَةِ الطَّيْرِ (I create for you from clay something in the shape of a bird - 3:49). In all these places the word خَلَقَ (creating) has been used in the metaphorical sense to mean "manufacture".

Here the word خَالِقِينَ (creators) has been used in the plural and the meaning is that though ordinary human beings who manufacture things may also be called خَالِقٍ or creators in the metaphorical sense, yet Allah is the best among all those creators.

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ

Then, after all this, you are to die - 23:15

The preceding three verses were about the creation of man and this

verse and the one which follows is about the life to come. In this verse Allah says that after his creation man will spend a period of time in this world and then will meet his death from which there is no escape. Then He says that man will be raised on the Day of Resurrection **ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ** (Then you are to be raised again on the Day of Judgment - 23:16) so that his deeds and actions in this world may be weighed and he may be sent to Paradise or Hell as he deserves. This is how a man's life would end. Further on there is a brief mention of the events which will take place in the intervening period between his life in this world and the life to come, and of the gift and blessings which Allah will bestow upon him. This is prefaced by a reference to the creation of the skies.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا فَوْقَكُمْ سَبْعَ طَرَائِقَ

And We created upon you seven paths (heavens) - 23:17

طَرِيقَ is the plural of **طَرِيقَة** which may also be used as a synonym for **طَبَقَة** (tier) in which case the meaning would be that Allah created seven skies overhead row upon row in tiers. The other and more common meaning of the word **طَرِيقَة** is "road" or "passage" in which case the verse would mean that these skies provide a path for the angels who bring commands from Allah to the earth.

وَمَا كُنَّا عَنِ الْخَلْقِ غَافِلِينَ (And We were never neglectful of the creation - 23:17). The verse means that Allah did not just abandon man after creating him, but was ever mindful of his needs and provided the means for his sustenance and growth. To this end He first created the skies and from the skies He sent forth rains upon the earth which then produced food for men's nourishment.

The Divine system of providing water to meet human needs

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَسْكَنَتْهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ ۖ وَآنَا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍ بِهٖ لِقَدَرُونَ

And We sent down water from the sky in due measure, then We lodged it in the earth, and of course, We are able to take it away. - 23:18

The addition of the phrase **بقدر** (In due measure) shows how feeble and utterly powerless man is, because if the very things without which no life can exist exceed a certain limit, they become the cause of death and destruction. Water is a case in point without which no living thing - man

or beast - can survive. Torrential rains coming down from the sky cause a deluge which becomes a source of misery for human beings. But Allah is kind and merciful and He sends rains which, while fulfilling man's needs, do not turn into flood except at those places where it is His will that they should be engulfed in water. Another point to consider is that if man was to obtain his daily requirement of water through daily rainfall, that too would cause extreme discomfort and suffering, because he is not by nature adapted to live in an environment where rain falls every day. Moreover the conduct of business would become impossible in such conditions. On the other hand, if the total quantity of water that men would need for a whole year, or for six months or even for three months were to come down in a single downpour and people are told to store their quota of water and use it according to their daily needs, that would be an impossible task because, apart from lack of adequate storage capacity, the water would become foul and unfit for consumption. Therefore Allah has regulated the supply of water in such a way that when rains come, the water saturates the earth and the plants and then it flows into lakes, ponds and natural depressions where it is used by men and animals according to their needs. But the water stored in this manner can only last for a limited time and men of different regions need a continuous supply of fresh water. To meet this eventuality Allah has designed a system by which very large quantities of water are converted into oceans of ice and snow and placed on top of mountains where the atmosphere is pure and free from pollution. Slowly and gradually the snow melts and the water seeps through the pores in the mountains and flows into the network of underground water channels which carry it to all parts as springs and flow on the surface of the earth as streams, water courses and rivers. This fresh running water provides drinking water to men and animals and irrigates fields which yield food and fodder for all living things. Another part of the water percolates deep into the ground and becomes sub-soil water and is drawn up from wells. This entire design and process is covered in the Qur'ān by a simple and short sentence **فَأَسْكَنَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ** (23:18). A point is also made at the end of the verse that the sub-soil water which is drawn from wells has been placed by merciful Allah at a depth from where it can be drawn easily because by its nature, water flows downwards and could have gone down to a depth from where it would have been impossible to draw it out. This is explained by the

sentence *وَأَنَّا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍ بِهَا لَقَادِرُونَ* and, of course, We are able to take it away(23:18).

The Qur'ān then goes on to say that it is from an assured and regular supply of water only that Allah created fruit gardens which produce dates and grapes and many other kinds of fruits. People eat these fruit for their taste and flavour and also preserve some of them for future use as articles of food as is evident from the sentence *وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ* (And of them you eat - 23:19). Then special mention is made of olives and the oil extracted from it because it has many uses and offers many benefits. And since the Mount Sinai produces an abundant crop of olives therefore a reference has been made to it *وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِن طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ* (And [We produced] a tree [of olive] that comes out from the [mount] Ṭūr of Sinai. - 23:20). Sinai is the name of the area where the Ṭūr Mountain is located. Olive oil can be used to massage the body, in lamps to provide light and in food as a curry or dressing. This has been expressed in the verse in the words. *تَنبُتُ بِالذَّهْنِ وَصَبِغٍ لِّلْأَكْلِينَ* (which grows having oil and a dressing for those who eat - 23:20). The reason why olive tree has been associated with the Ṭūr mountain is that this tree first grew on that mountain. Some people have said that it was the first tree to grow on earth after the great Deluge in the days of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام. (Maḏharī)

Then there is a mention of the blessings and the numerous gifts which Allah has provided for the benefit of mankind so that they may ponder and worship Him. The words of the verse are *وَأَنَّ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةً* (And indeed there is a sure lesson in the cattle for you - 23:21). The lesson to which this verse refers has been described further in the words *نُسْقِيكُمْ مِمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا* (We give you a drink from that which lies in their bellies - 23:21). Some of the ways in which the cattle serve mankind are that they provide milk which is a very clear and nourishing food; every part of their body is put to some use, and their wool, hides, intestines etc. are all utilized, in industries which support a country's economy, the meat of the animals, which are *ḥalāl* (permissible) is a favourite food for all men. *وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ* (and of them you eat - 23:21). And finally they are used, together with ships, as mounts and as means of transporting goods from one place to another. In the last benefit, ships and boats are also included, because they are also used in transportation *وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ* (And on them and on the boats you are transported - 23:22). All types of mounts which

are run with wheels may also be added to *fulk* (boats) because they render the same service.

Verses 23 - 30

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾ فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُوا الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۚ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَتَفَضَّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ ۖ وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً مِّنْ سَمْعِنَا بِهِذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ فْتَرَبِّصُوا بِهِ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٢٥﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ ﴿٢٦﴾ فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ أَنْ اصْنَعِ الْفُلْكَ بِأَعْيُنِنَا وَوَحَيْنَا فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُورُ ۖ فَاسْلُكْ فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجَيْنِ اثْنَيْنِ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا مَن سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ ۖ وَلَا تُخَاطِبُنِي فِي الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾ فَإِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ أَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَّعَكَ عَلَى الْفُلْكَ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّيْنَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ انزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُّبْرَكًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾ إِنْ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ وَرَأَيْنَا كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

And surely, We sent Nūḥ to his nation. So he said, "O my people, worship Allah. You have no god whatsoever other than Him. So, do you not fear Allah?" [23] So, said the disbelieving chiefs from among his nation, "This (man) is nothing but a human being like you. He wishes to impose his superiority over you. Had Allah willed, He would have sent down angels. We have not heard of such a thing among our forefathers. [24] He is none but a man possessed by madness, so wait for (what happens to) him, for some time" [25]

He said, "My Lord, help me, for they have belied me." [26] So, We sent Our revelation to him, saying, "Make the

ship under Our eyes and Our revelation. So, when Our command comes and the oven gushes forth, take on its board a pair of two from each (species) along with your family, except those of them against whom the word has already passed. And do not speak to Me (in favour) of those who did wrong. They are sure to be drowned. [27] So, when you and those with you, are well seated in the ship, say, 'Praise is for Allah who saved us from the wrongdoing people.' [28] And say, 'My Lord, make me land a blessed landing. And You are the best of those who bring (someone) to land'. [29]

Surely, there are signs in it and We do always test (people). [30]

وَقَارَ التَّنُورُ (And the oven gushes forth - 23:27). The word تَنُورٌ means oven which is used for making flat, round bread, and is also used in the sense of the whole earth. According to some people تَنُورٌ is a specific oven in the Kūfāh mosque, while others believe that it was somewhere in Syria. Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was informed by Allah that when water began boiling forth from the تَنُورُ (oven) that would be the sign of the coming of the Deluge (Maẓharī). The story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام, the Deluge and his Ark has been reported in some earlier Sūrahs (See Volume 4, p. 626 to 643).

Verses 31 - 41

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٣١﴾ فَأَرْسَلْنَا فِيهِمْ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ أَنْ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُم مِّنْ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ ۖ أَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنْ قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِإِلْقَاءِ الْآخِرَةِ وَآتَرَفْنَاهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا ۖ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ ۖ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَئِنْ أَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ ۖ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَخَسِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾ أَيْعِدُكُمْ أَنْكُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا أَنْكُمْ مُّخْرَجُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ هِيَ هِيَ هِيَ هِيَ لِمَا تُوْعَدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾ إِنَّ هِيَ الْآحْيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ

وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾ إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ ۖ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى
 اللَّهِ كَذِبًا وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾ قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا
 كَذَّبُونِ ﴿٣٩﴾ قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لِّيُصْبِحَنَّ نَدِيمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ
 الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ غُثَاءً ۖ فَبُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

Then after them We created another generation, [31] and sent among them a messenger from themselves (to convey the message): "Worship Allah; you have no god whatsoever than Him. So do you not fear Allah?" [32] So said those chiefs of his nation who disbelieved and belied facing the Hereafter and whom We made affluent in the worldly life, "This (man) is nothing but a human being. He eats from what you eat from, and drinks from what you drink. [33] And if you obey a human like you, you will be absolute losers. [34] Does he promise you that, when you die and are turned into dust and bones, you are to be brought forth? [35] Far too improbable is what you are being promised. [36] There is nothing but our worldly life. We die and we live and we are not to be raised again. [37] He is nothing but a man who has forged a lie against Allah and we are not going to believe in him." [38]

He said, "My Lord, help me, for they have belied me." [39] He (Allah) said, "In a little while they have to become remorseful." [40] So the Cry seized them according to the true (promise), and We turned them in to scum. So, woe to the wrongdoing people. [41]

In the earlier verses the story of Sayyidnā Nūḥ عليه السلام was told who was sent to his people to guide them along the path of righteousness and the following verses contain a brief account of some other prophets without mentioning their names and the people for whose guidance they were sent. From certain references and allusions the commentators have concluded that the verses refer to Sayyidnā Hūd عليه السلام or Sayyidnā Ṣāliḥ عليه السلام who were sent for the guidance of the tribes of 'Ād and Thamūd respectively. In the present story both these tribes are reported to have perished as a result of صَيْحَةٌ (Cry) from an unseen source, whereas in other verses it has been specifically mentioned that it was the tribe of

Thamūd which perished from صَيْحَةٍ (Cry) and this had led some scholars to the view that the words قَرْنًا آخَرِينَ (another generation) refers to Thamūd. An alternative explanation is that the word صَيْحَةٍ (Cry) has been used in the general sense of punishment from Allah in which case it would include the tribe of 'Ād also.

إِنْ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ

There is nothing but our worldly life. We die and we live and we are not to be raised again. - 23:37

This is the argument which the unbelievers advance when denying belief in the Day of Judgment. Those who deny it publicly are confirmed infidels, but it is very unfortunate that many Muslims also act in a manner that the same denial can be felt from their deeds and actions. They seem to be totally oblivious of the coming in of the Hereafter. May Allah Ta'ala grant them faith to release themselves from the clutches of this belief of theirs.

Verses 42 - 50

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُونًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾ مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا
وَمَا يَسْتَأْخِرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرًا ۖ كُلَّمَا جَاءَ أُمَّةٌ رَسُولُهَا
كَذَّبُوهُ فَاتَّبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ بَعْضًا وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ ۖ فَبُعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ
لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾ ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَأَخَاهُ هَارُونَ ۖ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ
مُبِينٍ ﴿٤٥﴾ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا عَالِينَ
﴿٤٦﴾ فَقَالُوا اتُّؤْمِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عِبَدُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾
فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ الْكِتَابَ
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّةً آيَةً وَآوَيْنَاهُمَا إِلَىٰ رَبْوَةٍ
ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ ﴿٥٠﴾

Then, after them, We created another generation. [42] No community can go ahead of its appointed time, nor can they stay behind. [43] Thereafter, We sent Our

messengers successively. Whenever a community was approached by its messenger they belied him. Then We made some of them follow others (in destruction) and turned them into tales (of history). So, woe to a people who do not believe. [44]

Thereafter, We sent Mūsā and his brother Hārūn, with Our signs and a clear proof [45] towards Fir'aun (the Pharaoh) and his advisors. But they showed arrogance and they were haughty people. [46] So they said, "shall we believe in two humans who are like ourselves and whose people are serving us as slaves?" [47] Thus they belied both of them and were among the destroyed. [48] And, of course, We gave Mūsā the Book, so that they may take the right path. [49]

And We made the son of Maryam (Mary) and his mother a sign and gave them shelter on a height, a place of rest and running springs. [50]

Commentary

وَأَوْيَيْنَهُمَا إِلَىٰ رُبُوعٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ (and We gave them shelter on a height, a place of rest and running springs). According to Bayān-ul-Qur'ān, this verse refers to the event that a tyrant was resolute to kill Sayyidnā 'Īsā and his mother عليهما السلام right from his childhood. They escaped from him and, with Allah's grace, found a place on a height where they enjoyed a peaceful life until Sayyidnā 'Īsā ﷺ attained maturity and was entrusted with prophethood. (This commentary is taken from Khulasa-e-tafsīr of Ma'āriful-Qur'ān).

Verses 51 - 56

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُّوَا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾ وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٥٢﴾ فَتَقَطَّعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا كُلُّ حِزْبٍ بِمَا لَدَيْهِمْ فَرِحُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾ فَذَرَهُمْ فِي عَمَرَتِهِمْ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾ أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُمِدُّهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَبَيْنٍ ﴿٥٥﴾ نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

O messengers, eat from the good things, and act righteously. Of whatever you do, I am fully aware. [51]

And surely, this is your creed, a single creed, and I am your Lord. So fear Me. [52] But they split up ways from one another (dividing themselves) into factions, each faction happy with what lies before it. [53] So leave them in their negligence for some time. [54]

Do they think that by consistently providing them with wealth and children, [55] We are accelerating the (real) good things to them? The fact, however, is that they do not understand (the reality). [56]

Commentary

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا (O messengers, eat from the good things and act, righteously - 23:51.) The word طَيِّبَات means pure and good things. Since things which are forbidden under the Islamic laws are neither pure nor desirable for people who are gifted with common sense, it follows that the word طَيِّبَات refers only to the things which are permitted under the Islamic Shari'ah and which are not only good in appearance, but also pure in their intrinsic nature. This verse also tells us that all the prophets were enjoined by Allah to do two things - eat food which is clean and permissible under Shariah, and to do good deeds, and considering that these injunctions have been addressed to prophets who are impeccable in any case, it is necessary that their followers should strive hard to mould their lives according to these injunctions. This in fact is the real meaning of this verse.

Scholars have expressed the view that the Juxtaposition of these two commands points to the fact that the consumption of lawful food has a very important bearing on human actions and when a person takes lawful food only, a divine guidance takes his actions along the path of righteousness. But if the food is unlawful, then serious obstacles will prevent the accomplishment of good deeds in spite of his best intentions. According to a *ḥadīth*, people travel long wearing miles and are covered with dust and they pray to Allah with hands upraised calling out "O Lord, O Lord!" But since they eat forbidden things and their clothes are also made from forbidden material, there is little hope of their prayers being granted. (Qurtubī) Thus it is evident that a person hoping that his worship will get him the pleasure of Allah or that his prayers will be granted by

Him must pay scrupulous attention to what he eats and must, at all times, avoid eating unlawful things.

وَإِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّةٌ أُمَّةٌ وَاحِدَةٌ (And surely this is your creed, a single creed - 23:52). The word *أُمَّة* is used to describe a group or the followers of a prophet. Sometimes it is also used in the sense of "faith", "creed" or "way of life", as in the verse وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا عَلَىٰ أُمَّةٍ (We found our fathers upon a creed - 43:22). In the present verse the word *ummah* has been used in the latter sense.

فَنَقَطُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ زُبُرًا (But they split up ways from one another (dividing themselves) into factions - 23:53). The word *زُبُر* is the plural of *زُبْر* meaning a book, and the verse would mean that Allah had commanded all prophets and their followers to adhere to the one and only faith revealed by Him in all matters relating to the basic principles and beliefs. But the followers of different prophets split up into groups and sects and each one of them chose a different way of life and adopted a different book in which the beliefs of each group and sect were recorded. Sometimes *زُبُر* is used for the plural of *زُبْرَة* (*zubah*) meaning "fragment" or "group". This meaning is more appropriate here and the meaning of the verse would be that these people were divided into sects even in the matter of fundamental beliefs of their religion. It should be noted that the difference of opinion among the *mujtahidīn* (competent Shari'ah Scholars) in some minor issues is not included in this division which is condemned in this verse, because these differences do not cause a division of the religion, nor do the people maintaining these differences become separate sects. Giving these interpretative and subsidiary differences a sectarian colour is the height of ignorance and no religious scholar would support it.

Verses 57 - 62

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ أَنَّهُمْ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ رَاجِعُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ وَلَا نُكَلِّفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

(Contrarily) those who are anxious out of awe of their Lord, [57] and those who believe in the verses of their Lord [58] and those who do not associate any partner to their Lord, [59] And those who give whatever they give with their hearts full of fear that to their Lord they are to return [60] – those people are accelerating towards the (real) good things, and they are the foremost to attain them. [61]

We do not place a burden on anyone except to his capability. And with Us is a book which speaks with truth, and they shall not be wronged. [62]

Commentary

وَالَّذِينَ يُؤْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا وَقُلُوبُهُمْ وَجَلَةٌ (And those who give whatever they give with their hearts full of fear - 23:60.) The word يُؤْتُونَ is derived from آتاء meaning "to give, to spend", and is used in commentaries in the sense of صَدَقَات (alms to the poor). Another reading of this verse reported from Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها يَأْتُونَ مَا آتَوْا (They do whatever they do - 23:60) and this covers all good deeds such as charity, prayers, fasting etc. As for the generally accepted reading of the verse, although it mentions alms to the poor only, yet it would include all good deeds also as is borne out by a ḥadīth. Sayyidah 'Ā'ishah رضى الله عنها asked the Holy Prophet ﷺ the meaning of this verse whether those who do these deeds are the ones who drink wine and steal things. The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "O daughter of Ṣiddīq ﷺ ! It is not as you say. These are the people who observe fasts, say their prayers and give alms, yet they are apprehensive lest, due to some mind lapse on their part, all their good deeds may not be accepted by Allah. They hasten to do good deeds and are foremost, in accomplishing them." (Aḥmad, Tirmidhī, Ibn Majah, Maḥzarī)

Ḥasan al-Baṣrī says that he knew people who did virtuous deeds, yet were more fearful than people who committed evil deeds. (Qurtubī)

أُولَئِكَ يُسَارِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ

Those people are accelerating towards the (real) good things, and they are the foremost to attain them. - 23:61

The meaning of مُسَارِعَتْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ is that just as ordinary human beings run after worldly gains and try to leave other competitors behind, these good and virtuous people strive to gain spiritual reward and try to excel

others in their efforts to fulfill their religious obligations.

Verses 63 - 77

بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ مِّنْ هَذَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا
 عَمِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَخَذْنَا مُتْرَفِيهِم بِالْعَذَابِ إِذَا هُمْ يَجْعَرُونَ
 ﴿٦٤﴾ لَا تَجْعَرُوا الْيَوْمَ إِنَّكُمْ مِنَّا لَا تَنْصُرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾ قَدْ كَانَتْ آيَتِي
 تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰ آعْقَابِكُمْ تَنْكِصُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾ مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ۖ
 بِهِ سَمِرًا تَهْجُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾ أَفَلَمْ يَذَّبَرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ
 آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾ أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾
 أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ ۚ بَلْ جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَآكَثَرَهُم لِلْحَقِّ كُرْهُونَ
 ﴿٧٠﴾ وَلَوْ اتَّبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ
 فِيهِنَّ ۚ بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ أَمْ
 تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا فَخَرَجَ رِبِّكَ خَيْرٌ ۖ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾ وَإِنَّكَ
 لَتَدْعُوهُمْ إِلَىٰ صِرَاطٍ مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٣﴾ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ
 عَنِ الصِّرَاطِ لَنُكِبُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾ وَلَوْ رَحِمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِنْ ضُرٍّ
 لَلَّجُوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا
 اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا ذَا
 عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

But their hearts are in ignorance about this, and they have deeds, other than that, which they are continuously doing. [63] Until when We will seize their affluent ones with punishment, they will suddenly start crying. [64] "Do not cry today. You will not be helped by Us. [65] My verses used to be recited to you, but you used to turn back on your heels [66] in arrogance,

making it a subject of tales at night, talking nonsense (about it)." [67] (1)

Then, is it that they did not ponder over the Word (of Allah) or there has come to them something that did not come to their forefathers? [68] Or did they not recognize their messenger and therefore they denied him? [69] Or do they say, 'He is possessed by madness?' Instead, the fact is that he has come to them with truth, but it is the truth that most of them dislike. [70]

And had the truth followed their desires, all the heavens and the earth and all those therein would have fallen in total disorder. However, We have brought to them their advice, but it is their advice that they are averse to. [71]

Or is it that you (O Muhammad) demand a remuneration from them? But the remuneration from your Lord is best, and He is the best of all givers. [72] And surely you are inviting them to a straight path, [73] and those who do not believe in the Hereafter are surely the deviators from the Path. [74]

And if We have mercy on them and remove whatever distress they have, they would still persist obstinately in their rebellion, wandering blindly. [75] And We have already seized them with punishment, but they did not turn humble to their Lord, nor do they supplicate in humility, [76] until when We will open against them the door of a severe punishment, they will be taken aback in despair. [77]

Commentary

بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمْرَةٍ (But their hearts are in ignorance) Lexically غَمْرَةٌ means deep water where a person may drown or be overwhelmed. For this reason the word is also used to signify a covering or something that conceals an object. In this verse the word means the ignorance in which the hearts of the infidels are submerged and hidden so that no light can

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- 1). Another possible translation of this verse may be as follows: 'but you used to turn back on your heels, being over-proud of it (the *ḥarām* being looked after by you), indulging in tales at night, talking nonsense.' It is this second translation on which the forthcoming explanation is based.

reach them.

وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَالٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَلِكَ

And they have deeds, other than that - 23:63

It means that in addition to their rejection of the Oneness of Allah, and their denial of the true faith, they engage themselves in other sinful deeds.

مُتَرَفِّهِمْ (their affluent ones - 23:64). The word مُتَرَفِّ is derived from تَرَفَّ meaning comfort and prosperity. This verse mentions the Divine punishment which will descend upon the unbelievers whether rich or poor. The rich people have been specially mentioned here because they are the ones who make adequate arrangements to protect themselves against disasters and misfortunes. But when retribution comes from Allah, they find themselves totally helpless. According to Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ the punishment which is mentioned in this verse is an allusion to the crushing defeat which the infidels of Makkah suffered at the hands of the Muslims in the Battle of Badr. Some others say that the reference is to the severe famine which afflicted the people of Makkah as a result of the curse laid on them by the Holy Prophet ﷺ, when they were forced to eat dead animals and cats and dogs.

Although the Holy Prophet ﷺ and his companions, when faced ill-treatment from the infidels, used to remain patient and never complained yet when their suffering and torment became unbearable, the Holy Prophet invoked divine punishment for the infidels in the following words:

اللَّهُمَّ اشْدُدْ وَطْأَتَكَ عَلَى مَضَرَ وَاجْعَلْهَا عَلَيْهِمْ سَنِينَ كَسَنَى يَوْسُفَ (رواه البخارى و مسلم) (قرطبي و مظهرى)

(O Lord! Let thy punishment descend hard on the tribe of Muḍar and make their land barren like the land of Yūsuf.

مُسْتَكْبِرِينَ بِهِ سِمِرًا تَهْجُرُونَ (Being over-proud of it (the ḥarām), indulging in tales at night talking non-sense). According to many commentators the word بِهِ (on it) in this verse has a reference to the ḥarām (the sanctuary of Makkah). Although there is no specific mention of the ḥarām in the verse, yet the very close association of the Quraish of Makkah with it and their great pride in this association renders a specific mention of the ḥarām

unnecessary. The purpose of the verse, therefore, is to mention the causes of their aversion against Allah's verses. The first factor was their pride in their being the neighbors and care-takers of *ḥarām*. The other two factors are mentioned in the next two words.

The word سَامِرًا is derived from سَمَرَ meaning "Moon lit night". It was a favourite pastime with the Arabs to assemble on moon lit nights and tell stories. Thus the word سَمَرَ came to be used in the sense of stories and anecdotes and سَامِر meant a raconteur. Although the word has been used in the singular yet it is often used as a plural also as in this verse. This word points out the second reason for the repudiation of divine communications by the infidels of Makkah which is their preoccupation with petty and frivolous matters such as story-telling and their lack of interest in divine messages. And finally there was a third reason for this state of affairs also namely that they used to indulge in foolish talk and pass unseemly remarks about the Holy Prophet ﷺ.

The word تَهْجُرُونَ (23:67) is derived from هَجَرَ with a *ḍammah* mark (') on the letter ه and means "to speak nonsense, to use foul language".

Ban on story-telling after 'Ishā' prayers

Story telling was favourite pastime among the Arabs and the Persians since ancient times. This habit was not only time wasting but was also the cause of certain evils. With a view to discourage this practice, the Holy Prophet ﷺ enjoined upon the Muslims not to sleep before the 'Ishā' prayers. The philosophy behind this injunction was that all daily human activity ended with the 'Ishā' prayers which should arguably be a man's last action and which might even atone for his lapses during the day. On the other hand if, after the 'Ishā' prayers, he sits down to while away his time listening to silly and frivolous tales which in itself is a foolish act, he renders himself guilty of encouraging falsehood, back-biting and other sins. Another consequence of this evil habit is that such a person will go to bed late, will rise late and miss his early morning prayers. Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ used to admonish people whom he found listening to stories after 'Ishā' prayers and advised them to go early to bed so that with Allah's grace they might be enabled to say midnight prayers. (Qurṭubī)

The verses 68, 69 and 70 mention five reasons which might possibly have prevented the unbelievers from accepting the faith brought by the

Holy Prophet ﷺ, and also give a rebuttal of each of these causes. Thus on the one hand all the arguments advanced by the infidels for not accepting the true faith have been demolished, and on the other hand there are compelling grounds and irrefutable evidence which should convince any right minded person of his error and persuade him to accept the message brought by the Holy Prophet ﷺ. Their persistence in their unbelief is, therefore, the result of their unreasoning hatred towards and blind prejudice against the Holy Prophet ﷺ to which a reference has been made in the latter part of the verse *بَلْ جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَكَثُرَهُمُ لِلْحَقِّ كَارِهُونَ* (Instead, the fact is that he has come to them with truth, but it is the truth that most of them dislike - 23:70). In other words, there being no valid and rational ground for repudiating the mission of the Holy Prophet ﷺ their opposition may be explained by their dislike of truth and their unwillingness to pay heed to its message. This, no doubt, is due to their love for undisputed power and their reluctance to share it with anyone else.

أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ

Or did they not recognize their messenger? - 23:69.

One reason for their denial of the true faith could have been if the message was brought to them by an outsider who was a stranger to them and with whose character and antecedents they were unfamiliar. But this argument could not be invoked in the case of the Holy Prophet ﷺ who belonged to the noble family of Quraish, was born in Makkah, grew up among them, and his whole life was like an open book before them. Before prophethood was bestowed upon him, he was known among the unbelievers of Makkah as *أَمِين* (trustworthy) and *صَادِق* (truthful) and nobody had ever raised an accusing finger on his character and general behavior. Thus they could not take the plea that their repudiation of the Holy Prophet ﷺ and of the message brought to him was due to their ignorance about him or about his family connections.

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُم بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَتَضَرَّعُونَ

And We have already seized them with punishment, but they did not turn humble to their Lord, nor do they supplicate in humility. (23:76)

In the preceding verse it has been stated that when the unbelievers are subjected to chastisement for their sins, they plead to Allah and the Holy Prophet ﷺ for mercy and when Allah who is Merciful relieves their

suffering, they return to their evil practices and wicked deeds. This verse relates a similar instance when the unbelievers were punished for their misdeeds. However when they were delivered from their sufferings as a result of the intercession by the Holy Prophet ﷺ on their behalf, they did not humble themselves before Allah but persisted in idolatry and unbelief.

Visitation of famine upon Makkah and its deliverance on the prayers of the Holy Prophet ﷺ

It has been mentioned earlier that the Holy Prophet ﷺ had prayed to Allah to punish the people of Makkah with famine and as a result they were reduced to great straits and were forced to eat dead animals. At last, Abū Sufyān presented himself before the Holy Prophet ﷺ at Madīnah and said, "I appeal you in the name of Allah, did you not say that you had been sent by Him as mercy for the whole world?" The Holy Prophet ﷺ replied, "Yes I did, and what I said is true also." Then Abū Sufyān said, "You killed the leaders of your clan with sword at the battle of Badr and now you are killing those who still survive with starvation. Pray to Allah, I beseech you, to remove this curse from over our heads." The Holy Prophet ﷺ then prayed to Allah to forgive the people of Makkah and deliver them from the agony of hunger, and his prayer was granted forthwith. The verse: وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ (23:76) was revealed on this occasion and refers to this incident. (Maẓharī)

Verses 78 - 92

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَارَ وَالْأَفْئِدَةَ ۖ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي ذَرَأَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٧٩﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتِلَافُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ ۚ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾ بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿٨١﴾ قَالُوا ۖ إِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظَامًا ۖ إِنَّا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾ لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا نَحْنُ وَآبَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ ۖ إِن هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾ قُلْ لِّمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا ۖ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ ۖ قُلْ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾ قُلْ مَنْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ السَّبْعِ وَرَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٨٦﴾

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلّٰهِ ۚ قُلْ اَفَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾ قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيزُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ سَيَقُولُونَ لِلّٰهِ ۚ قُلْ فَاَنِّى تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾ بَلْ اَتَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَاِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾ مَا اتَّخَذَ اللّٰهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ اِلٰهٍ اِذَا لَذَهَبَ كُلُّ اِلٰهٍ بِمَا خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ سُبْحٰنَ اللّٰهِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩١﴾ عَلِيمُ الْغَيْبِ وَالشَّهَادَةِ فَتَعَلٰى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

And He is the One who created for you the ears and the eyes and the hearts. Little you are grateful. [78] And He is the One who created you on the earth and it is He unto whom you will be gathered together. [79] And He is the One who gives life and brings death and it is He to whom belongs the alternation of night and day. So, do you not understand? [80]

But they said like what the earlier people had said. [81] They said, "Is it that, when we will die and become dust and bones--is it that we will be raised again? [82] This is what we and our fathers had been promised with before. It is nothing but the tales of the ancients." [83] Say, "Whose is the earth and all those therein if you have knowledge?" [84] They will say, "Allah's." Would you still pay no heed? [85]

Say, "Who is the Lord of the seven heavens and the Lord of the Great Throne?" [86] They will say, "(All this belongs) to Allah". Say, "Would you still not fear Allah?" [87] Say, "Who is the One in whose hand lies the kingdom of every thing and who gives protection and no protection can be given against him, if you have knowledge?" [88] They will say, "(All this belongs) to Allah." Say, "Then from where are you being bewitched?" [89]

The fact is that We have brought to them The Truth, and they are absolute liars. [90] Allah did not take to a son, nor was there any god with Him. Had there been so, every god would have taken away what he created and each one of them would have been aggressive

against the other. Pure is Allah from what they describe. [91] He is the Knower of the hidden and the manifest. So, He is far higher than their ascribing of partners to Him. [92]

Commentary

وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ (And who gives protection and no protection can be given against him - 23:88) The meaning of the verse is that Allah alone can deliver a person from pain and suffering as He wills, but there is none who can save a person from divine punishment. This is true of this world because nobody can stop Allah from rewarding virtuous people nor can anyone protect someone whom He chooses to punish. And the same is true of the Hereafter also. (Qurṭubī)

Verses 93 - 100

قُلْ رَبِّ إِنَّمَا تُرِنِّي مَا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ
الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٩٤﴾ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ أَنْ نُرِيكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَدِيرُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾ اذْفَعُ
بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ ۖ نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ
أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ
﴿٩٨﴾ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿٩٩﴾ لَعَلِّي
أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا ۚ إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا ۚ وَمِنْ
وَرَاءِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَىٰ يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

(O prophet) say (in prayer), "O my Lord, if You are to show me (in my life) that (punishment) which they (the infidels) are threatened with, [93] then, my Lord, do not place me among the wrongdoing people." [94] And of course, We do have the power to show you what We threatened them with. [95]

Repel evil with that which is best. We are well aware of what they describe. [96] And say, "O my Lord, I seek your refuge from the strokes of the satans, [97] and I seek Your refuge from that they come to me." [98]

(The infidels go on doing their misdeeds) until when

death comes to one of them, he will say, "My Lord send me back, [99] so that I may act righteously in that which I have left behind." Never! It is just a word he has to utter. And in front of them there is a barrier till the day when they will be resurrected. [100]

Commentary

قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيتَنِي مَا يُوعَدُونَ . رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ

(O prophet) say (in prayer), "O my Lord, if You are to show me (in my life) that (punishment) which they (the infidels) are threatened with, then, my Lord, do not place me among the wrongdoing people." (23: 93, 94)

There are many verses of the Qur'ān which contain warnings of punishment to the unbelievers. While the award of punishment is a certainty on the Day of Judgment, it is possible that it may be awarded in this world also - and even during the life time of the Holy Prophet ﷺ. And when Allah's wrath descends upon a people, it is not confined to sinners alone, but some times it afflicts virtuous people too, who may not be punished in the Hereafter and may even be compensated by extra rewards for the undeserved punishment which they suffered in this world. The Qur'ān says اِتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً (And beware of a punishment which shall not fall on the wrongdoers only - 8:25). In these verses, the Holy Prophet ﷺ has been told by Allah to pray to Him that if His wrath were to descend upon the infidels in his life time, then He ﷺ should be removed from their company. This prayer was suggested to the Holy Prophet ﷺ in spite of the fact that he was impeccable and infallible, the intention being that He ﷺ should at all times remember Allah and beseech His mercy so as to increase his own reward in the Hereafter.

وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُرِيكَ مَا نَعِدُهُمْ لَقَدِيرُونَ

And of course, We do have the power to show you what We threatened them with. (23:95)

Some commentators say that even though Allah has promised, on account of His regard for the Holy Prophet ﷺ, that He will not punish the entire community while he lives among them وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُعَذِّبَهُمْ وَأَنْتَ فِيهِمْ (And Allah is not to send punishment upon them while you are in their midst - 8:33) yet the punishment of some selected persons in special circumstance does not negate the promise. The punishment of the infidels

of Makkah through famine and through their defeat at the hands of the Muslims at the Battle of Badr had taken place in the lifetime of the Holy Prophet ﷺ, which is emphasized in this verse that "We have the power to show you what We threatened them with".

إِذْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ السَّيِّئَةِ

Repel evil with that which is best - 23:96

Allah instructs the Holy Prophet ﷺ to counter evil with good, oppression with justice and cruelty with mercy. These virtues of conduct have been taught by Allah to the Holy Prophet ﷺ and are generally observed in settling affairs among the Muslims. Later on these instructions were repealed in so far as the infidels and the unbelievers were concerned when Allah permitted Muslims to embark on جهاد (Jihād). Nevertheless even during Jihād the Muslims were told to adopt a humane approach towards the enemy. For example they were forbidden to kill women and children or the priests who did not engage in battle against the Muslims. Similarly, mutilation of the dead bodies of enemies was strictly forbidden. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet ﷺ is instructed in the next verse to seek protection from Satan's evil suggestions even in the battle fields where he may arouse emotions to act against ethics.

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ ﴿٩٧﴾ وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ ﴿٩٨﴾

And say, 'O my Lord, I seek your refuge from the strokes of the satans, and I seek Your refuge from that they come to me.'

(23:97, 98)

The word هَمَز (the infinitive of Hamazāt translated above as 'strokes') means "to push, to press" and sometimes is also used to mean "to make a call from behind". This is a very comprehensive prayer often invoked for protection from the guile and mischief of Satan and the Holy Prophet ﷺ has urged upon the Muslims to recite it frequently in order to avoid sudden bursts of rage which are brought about by the promptings of Satan and which cause people to lose self-control. This prayer is also very effective in repelling other assaults of Satans and Jinns. Sayyidnā Khalid ؓ suffered from insomnia and the Holy Prophet ﷺ suggested that he should recite the following prayer before going to bed :

أَعُوذُ بِكَلِمَاتِ اللَّهِ التَّامَّةِ مِنْ غَضَبِ اللَّهِ وَعِقَابِهِ وَمِنْ شَرِّ عِبَادِهِ وَمِنْ هَمَزَاتِ
الشَّيَاطِينِ وَأَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ

I seek refuge with Allah's Perfect Words from Allah's wrath and His punishment, and from the evils of His slaves, and from the strokes of the satans and from that they come to me.

Sayyidnā Khālīd ؓ did as advised and was soon cured of insomnia.

أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ (from that they come to me - 23:98) According to a *ḥadīth* in Ṣaḥīḥ of Muslim the Holy Prophet ﷺ is reported to have said that Satan meddles in all human affairs and tempts people to do evil deeds, and that this prayer is the best protection against his attempts. (Qurṭubī)

رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ (My Lord, send me back - 23:99) When death approaches an infidel and he senses the punishment that awaits him on the Day of Judgment, he wishes for a return to this world, so that by performing good deeds he may escape the punishment which he has richly deserved.

Ibn Jarīr has related a story on the authority of Ibn Juraij that the Holy Prophet ﷺ once said, "At the time of death when a good Muslim perceives the angels of mercy and all the luxuries of Paradise spread out before him, and the angels ask whether he wishes to be sent back to the world, his reply invariably is in the negative. He refuses to return to a place which is full of woes and suffering and misery, and only desires to be taken to Allah's presence. But when the same question is put to an infidel, his answer is رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ i.e. he wishes to be sent back to the world."

كَلاَّ إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ

Never! It is just a word he has to utter. And in front of them there is a barrier till the day when they will be resurrected.
(23:100)

The word بَرْزَخ (Barzakh) means "barrier" and implies anything which intervenes between two conditions or two objects. For this reason it also means the intervening period between death and the Day of Judgment. The meaning of this verse is that the wish of the infidel who has died to be returned to this world is fruitless, because he has reached the Barzakh from which no return is possible and a second life cannot be given until the Day of Resurrection, when all the dead will rise and be brought back to life.

Verses 101 -115

فَإِذَا انْفُخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾
 فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ
 مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾
 تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهُهُمُ النَّارَ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾ أَلَمْ تَكُنْ آيَتِي تُتْلَى
 عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾ قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا
 وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾ رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ
 ﴿١٠٧﴾ قَالَ اخْسَرُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ
 عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ
 ﴿١٠٩﴾ فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سُخْرِيًّا حَتَّى أَنْسَوْكُمْ ذِكْرِي وَكُنْتُمْ مِّنْهُمْ
 تَضْحَكُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾ إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا ۖ إِنَّهُمْ هُمُ
 الْفَآئِزُونَ ﴿١١١﴾ قُلْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾ قَالُوا
 لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسْئَلِ الْعَادِّينَ ﴿١١٣﴾ قُلْ إِنْ لَّبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا
 لَّوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾ أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّكُمْ خُلِقْتُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنْكُمْ
 إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾

Thereafter, when the *Ṣūr* (the trumpet) is blown, there are no ties of kinship between them, nor will they question one another. [101] So, the one whose scales (of good deeds) turn out to be heavy, then such people are the successful ones, [102] and the one whose scales turn out to be light, then such people are the ones who harmed their own selves; in Jahannam (Hell) they are to remain for ever. [103] Fire will scorch their faces and they will be disfigured therein. [104]

(It will be said to such people), "Were My verses not used to be recited to you and you used to belie them?" [105] They will say, "Our Lord, our wretchedness

prevailed over us, and we were a people wandering astray. [106] O our Lord, get us out from here; if we do this again, then of course, we will be transgressors."

[107] He (Allah) will say, "Stay in it, humiliated, and do not speak to Me" [108] There was indeed a group of My servants who used to say, "Our Lord, we adhere to the (true) faith, so forgive us and have mercy upon us, and you are the best of all the merciful." [109] But you made fun of them, so much so that they caused you to forget My remembrance, and you used to laugh at them. [110] I have given them today, for their observing patience, the recompense that they are the only ones who are victorious.' [111]

He (Allah) will say, "How long did you stay on the earth by number of years?" [112] They will say, "We stayed for a day or for a part of a day." So, ask the ones who count. [113] He will say, "You did not stay but for a little. Would that you have understood (this at that time)! [114] So did you think that We created you for nothing and that you will not be brought back to Us?" [115]

Commentary

فَإِذَا أَنْفَخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ

Thereafter, when the Ṣūr (the trumpet) is blown, there are no ties of kinship between them, - 23:101.

On the Day of Judgment the صور (trumpet) will be sounded twice. The result of the first sound will be that everything - the earth, the skies and every living thing in between will perish and when the second sound is given, every dead thing will come back to life. This is clearly mentioned in the Qur'an in the verse ثُمَّ نَفْخُ فِيهِ أُخْرَىٰ فَإِذَا هُمْ قِيَامٌ يَنْظُرُونَ (Then it shall be blown again, and lo! They shall stand beholding - 39:68). There is difference of opinion whether in the present verse the reference is to the first call or to the second call. According to Ibn Jubair Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ thought that it refers to the first call. On the other hand Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ says that reference here is to second call and, according to 'Aṭā' الله رحمه as Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ also supports this view and which has also been adopted in Tafsīr Maḥḥarī. Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ says that on the Day of Judgment every man and woman will be assembled in the gathering place (مَحْشَر) where a herald appointed by

Allah will identify each person by his name and his father's name and invite any one from amongst those present who has a claim against him to come forward and receive it. This proclamation will please everyone - a father having a claim against his son, a wife having a claim against her husband, a sister having a claim against her brother (and vice versa) - and they will all come forward to receive their dues. The present verse describes this situation: فَلَا أَسْبَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ (There are no ties of kinship between them - 23:101). The same situation has been described in the verse يَوْمَ يَفِرُّ الْمَرْءُ مِنْ أَخِيهِ وَأُمِّهِ وَأَبِيهِ وَصَاحِبَتِهِ وَبَنِيهِ (Upon the day when a man shall flee from his brother, his mother, his father, his consort, his sons, - 80:34).

Difference between the condition of believers and infidels in *maḥshar* (gathering place on the Day of Judgement)

The condition described above will apply to the unbelievers only who in their selfishness will abandon their dear and near relatives. As for the believers, Allah has said أَلْحَقْنَا بِهِمْ ذُرِّيَّتَهُمْ (We shall join their seed with them. - 52:21) which means that the children of good Muslims, if they themselves are believers also, will be united with their parents. According to a *ḥadīth* the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment when everybody will be dry with thirst, Muslim children who had died as minors will come out carrying water from Paradise, and when people will ask them for it, they will reply that water is for their parents only whom they are searching". The gist of this discussion is that whereas in the case of infidels no one will be of any help to each other nor will anyone recognize the dear ones in *maḥshar*, the case of Muslim will be exactly the opposite. The believers will help each other and will also intercede for other Muslims.

There is also a *ḥadīth* which Ibn 'Asākir has related on the authority of Sayyidnā 'Umar ؓ in which the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment all relationships arising out of a common ancestry or from marriage ties will be severed except in my own case." Scholars have interpreted this verse to mean that all the Muslims of the Ummah of the Holy Prophet ﷺ are part of his family, because he is the father of the Ummah and his wives are the mothers.

وَلَا يَسْأَلُونَ (nor will they question one another - 23:101). However their is another verse وَأَقْبَلْ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ يَسْأَلُونَ (And advance one upon another, asking each other question - 37:27). Discussing this latter verse Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ says that in *maḥshar* there will be different stations, and

the conditions in each station will be different. There will be a time when nobody will speak to anybody, but in another station when the terror which earlier overwhelmed the gathering abates, people will converse with one another. (Maẓharī)

فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَٰئِكَ
الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

So, the one whose scales (of good deeds) turn out to be heavy, then such people are the successful ones, [102] and the one whose scales turn out to be light, then such people are the ones who harmed their own selves; in Jahannam (Hell) they are to remain for ever. (23: 102, 103)

In this verse there is a comparison between perfect Muslims and the infidels and their deeds and the end which awaits them. There is further evidence in the Qur'ān that in the case of perfect Muslims the pan in which evil deeds are placed for balancing will be totally empty, whereas in the case of unbelievers the pan in which the good deeds are placed will be empty. At another place the Qur'ān says *فَلَا نُقِيمُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَزْنًا* (We shall not assign to them any weight - 18:105) meaning that on the Day of Judgement, the infidels or their deeds will carry no weight. This is so far as the perfect Muslims and the infidels are concerned. As for the Muslims who have committed sins and whose good deeds and evil deeds will be placed in the two pans of the scale for weighing, there is no specific mention about them in the Qur'ān which is, in general, silent about the punishment and reward of erring Muslims. Perhaps the reason for this is that during the period when the Qur'ān was being revealed, all the Companions were upright men and generally free from major sins, but if somebody committed a sin incidentally, he repented and was forgiven by Allah. (Maẓharī)

There is a verse of the Qur'ān which deals with people who have a mixed bag of good and evil deeds (*خَلَطُوا عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَآخَرَ سَيِّئًا*) (They had mixed a good deed with another that was evil - 9:102). Sayyidnā 'Abbās رضي الله عنه says about such people that if their good deeds exceed their bad deeds, even by a single deed they will go to Paradise and if their evil deeds exceed their good by a single deed, they would go to Hell. But a believer Muslim will be sent to Hell for the purpose of purification only just as gold and iron and other metals are subjected to heating process to remove their

impurities and as soon as they are purged of their sins, they will be admitted to Paradise. Also according to Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ on the Day of Judgment the weighing scale will be so precise and finely tuned that it will be tipped by a grain of rye and a man whose good and bad deeds are of equal weight in the scale will join أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ (People of A'raf) and spend a while between heaven and hell waiting for a decision, but ultimately he too would go to Paradise (Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, Maḥzarī). The above story of Sayyidnā 'Abbās ؓ deals only with believers who have committed sins, and makes no mention of unbelievers.

How will the deeds be weighed?

There are different versions about the method for the weighing of deeds, and all of them are derived from ḥadīth. One version is that the believers and the infidels will be weighed bodily in the scale of justice and the infidel will not be able to tilt the scale however obese and corpulent he may be (Bukhārī and Muslim, quoting Abū Hurairah). Another version says that the scrolls on which their deeds are recorded will be weighed. Tirmidhī, Ibn Mājah, Ibn Ḥayyān have taken this version from Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn 'Umar ؓ. And according to a third version a man's deeds which were weightless and intangible in this world, will be made solid on the Day of Judgment and will be placed on the scales and weighed. Ṭabrānī has related this version from the Holy Prophet ﷺ on the authority of Sayyidnā Ibn 'Abbās ؓ. The words and the text of all these ḥadīths are given in full in Tafsīr Maḥzarī which may be consulted if required. Abdur Razzāq has quoted a ḥadīth in his book under the chapter on فَضْلُ الْعِلْمِ (the merits of knowledge) on the authority of Ibrāhīm Nakha'ī which supports the just preceded version. This version has it that on the Day of Judgment a person's deeds will be brought for weighing and when placed in the pan, they will fail to tilt it. Then something resembling clouds will be brought and put in the pan of good deeds which will then weigh down. The man will then be asked what was it that lent weight to the pan of his good deeds, but he will express his ignorance. Then he will be informed that the object in question was his learning which he used to impart to other people. Dhahabi has included a ḥadīth in فَضْلُ الْعِلْمِ which he heard from Sayyidnā 'Imrān Ibn Ḥusain ؓ that the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "On the Day of Judgment the blood of the martyrs will be weighed against the ink of scholars (with which they wrote books on the science of religion)

and the latter will be heavier than the former." (Maẓharī) After giving the above mentioned versions about the weighing of deeds, Tafsīr Maẓharī says that it is not wholly inconceivable that man himself and his deeds may be weighed physically or that he and his record of deeds may be weighed together. Thus there is no inconsistency in these three versions.

وَهُمْ فِيهَا كِلْحُونَ (And they will be disfigured therein - 23:104). The word كَالِح is used for a person whose lips do not meet and leave his teeth fully exposed, which looks very ugly. It is said that the upper lip of a person consigned to Hell will be drawn up and his lower lip will be drawn down so that his teeth will remain visible at all times.

وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونَ (Do not speak to Me - 23:108). According to Ḥasan al-Baṣrī these will be the last words of the people who are cast in hell and in reply Allah will say, "Do not speak to Me." After this they will not be able to speak like human beings, but will make animal sounds to each other. Baihaqī and others have quoted Muḥammad Ibn Ka'b as saying that the Qur'ān mentions five requests made by the people condemned to hell. Out of the five, replies were furnished to four, but in reply to the fifth Allah commanded them not to speak to Him. Thus these are the last words to be uttered by them after which they will not be able to speak. (Maẓharī)

Verses 116 - 118

فَتَعَلَى اللَّهِ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ ۚ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ
﴿١١٦﴾ وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ ۚ فَإِنَّمَا حِسَابُهُ
عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾ وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ
خَيْرُ الرَّحِيمِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

So, High above all is Allah, the King, the True. There is no god but He, the Lord of the Noble Throne. [116] And whoever invokes another god with Allah, while he has no proof for it, his reckoning lies with his Lord. Surely, the infidels will not achieve success. [117] And say (O prophet) 'My Lord, forgive and have mercy and you are the best of all the merciful.' [118]

Commentary

The last few verses of this Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn from verse 115 to verse 118 have special merit. Baghawī and Tha'labi have related from Sayyidnā Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ that he came across a person who was very ill. He recited the above verses into the sick man's ears and he was cured immediately. The Holy Prophet ﷺ asked him what he had whispered in the sick man's ears to which Sayyidnā 'Abdullāh Ibn Mas'ūd ؓ replied that he had recited these verses (115 to 118) in his ears. Thereupon the Holy Prophet ﷺ said, "I swear by Him Who has power over my life that if a person with genuine faith were to recite these verses on a mountain, the mountain itself may move from its place". (Qurṭubī and Mazharī)

رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ (My Lord, forgive and have mercy - 23:118). Here the object of the forgiveness and having mercy has not been mentioned. What is there to be forgiven and to whom is mercy to be shown? And this seems to suggest a general prayer for forgiveness which would include deliverance from harm and suffering, and a general prayer for mercy which would include the grant of every wish. Since protection from bodily harm and acquisition of legitimate gains is the object of all human activity, this prayer covers both these aspects. (Mazharī) And the reason why the Holy Prophet ﷺ was commanded to recite this prayer of forgiveness and mercy, even though he is impeccable, is to impress upon his followers the special merit of this prayer. (Qurṭubī)

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn began with the verse قَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ (Success is really attained by the believers - 23:1) and ends with إِنَّهُ لَا يَفْلَحُ الْكَافِرُونَ (Surely, the infidels will not achieve success - 23:117) which shows that success will come to believers only and that the unbelievers will have no share of it.

Alḥamdulillāh

The Commentary on

Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn

Ends here.